



BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

NYS OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION
& HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
(518) 474-0479

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

UNIQUE SITE NO. _____
QUAD _____
SERIES _____
NEG. NO. _____

YOUR NAME: Cynthia Howk DATE: Dec., 1994

133 S. Fitzhugh St.
YOUR ADDRESS: Rochester, NY 14608 TELEPHONE: 546-7029

ORGANIZATION (if any): The Landmark Society of Western New York, Inc.

IDENTIFICATION Volkmar-

1. BUILDING NAME(S): Wehner Farm
2. COUNTY: Monroe TOWN/CITY: Greece VILLAGE: ---
3. STREET LOCATION: 2458 Ridgeway Avenue
4. OWNERSHIP: a. public ☐ b. private ☒
5. PRESENT OWNER: Joseph Nacca & Lisa CapiZZi ADDRESS: (same) Rochester, NY 14626
6. USE: Original: residence/farm Present: residence (vacant)
7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes ☒ No ☐
Interior accessible: Explain private residence

DESCRIPTION

8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard ☐ b. stone ☐ c. brick ☒ d. board and batten ☐
e. cobblestone ☐ f. shingles ☐ g. stucco ☐ other: _____
Roof - asphalt shingles. Foundation - fieldstone.
9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: a. wood frame with interlocking joints ☐
(if known) b. wood frame with light members ☐
c. masonry load bearing walls ☒
d. metal (explain) _____
e. other _____
10. CONDITION: a. excellent ☐ b. good ☒ c. fair ☐ d. deteriorated ☐
11. INTEGRITY: a. original site ☒ b. moved ☐ if so, when? _____
c. list major alterations and dates (if known): _____

(see continuation sheet)

12. PHOTO:

13. MAP:

"Here's another painted brick house. There's not much architectural detail, except the Italianate side porch. Some of the windows have been changed. This is a farm complex with its barns still intact. Let's give this a 'red minus' rating to reflect its significance as a farm complex." P.Malo.

COLOR CODE

Red minus



14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known ☐ b. zoning ☒ c. roads ☒
d. developers ☒ e. deterioration ☒ - of outbuildings
f. other: currently for sale
15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:
a. barn ☒ 2 b. carriage house ☐ c. garage ☐
d. privy ☐ e. shed ☐ f. greenhouse ☐
g. shop ☐ h. gardens ☐
i. landscape features: deciduous & coniferous trees/shrubs
j. other: well (E. of house)
16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):
a. open land ☒ b. woodland ☒ - along N. property line
c. scattered buildings ☐
d. densely built-up ☒ e. commercial ☒
f. industrial ☐ g. residential ☒
h. other: _____
17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:
(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

(see continuation sheet)

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):

(see continuation sheet)

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: c. 1852

ARCHITECT: not determined

BUILDER: not determined

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

(see continuation sheet)

21. SOURCES: (see continuation sheet)

22. THEME: agricultural: former farm residence & outbuildings.

11c.

The Italianate front porch on the southeast corner of the house has been enclosed, c. 1960s-70s.

The one-story, shed-roofed porch on the northeast corner of the house has been enclosed, c. 1960s-70s.

A one-story, shed-roofed, enclosed porch with concrete block knee walls has been added to the northwest corner of the house, c. 1960s-70s.

The one-story, gable-roofed rear wing was remodeled and the garage installed in the former woodshed area after the Wehners sold this property, c. 1960s.

17. This mid-19th-century, vernacular farmhouse is located on a 1.9-acre lot on the north side of Ridgeway Avenue in the southeast quadrant of the town. It has a moderately deep set-back from the road. A driveway is located to the east of the house. Immediately northeast of the house is the original well (the pump has been removed, but the well shaft is extant). Two contributing, gable-roofed barns are northeast of the house. The property has many deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs. Along the north property line is the former Erie Canal bed (abandoned in the 1920s), now overgrown. To the west is a large open field, currently for sale for commercial development. To the east is a residential neighborhood of mostly post-World War II ranch and split level houses. Across the street to the south is the Canal Ponds Office Park, constructed (early 1990s) on land that was originally part of this farm.

18. Two-and-one-half-story, front-gable-and-side-wing, vernacular, brick farmhouse (c. 1852) with one-story, gable-roofed, frame, rear wing. The front-gabled block is three bays-wide by two-bays-deep. The side-gabled wing is two-bays-wide by one-bay-deep. The house stands on a fieldstone foundation with a stone watertable. Fenestration is regular and symmetrical with 1/1, double-hung windows. The windows have stone sills; many of them retain their historic, louvered, wood shutters. There is an oculus window in the front gable. The roof has a wide overhang. A brick chimney is located on the east elevation and a second, smaller chimney is located on the north slope of the roof.

18. continued

An enclosed, one-story, porch is located in the front, southeast corner. Although this porch has been enclosed (c. 1960s-70s), it retains the original Italianate style chamfered posts and brackets. An entrance with original, double-pane door leads out onto this porch from the east wall.

The rear, one-story, gable-roofed wing is of frame construction. A one-story, enclosed, shed-roofed porch and modern garage (with contemporary overhead door) is located on the east elevation. This porch was enclosed in the 1960s, after the Wehners sold the house. A second, enclosed, one-story porch with shed roof is located on the west elevation; this porch was added to the house after the Wehners sold the property (1960s). The present garage was used as a woodshed during the Wehners' ownership; it was converted into a garage in the 1960s, after the Wehners sold the property.

In addition to the historic farmhouse, the property is distinguished for its two surviving agricultural outbuildings:

Contributing gable-roofed barn (late-1880s-early 1900s) located northeast of the house. This south barn, located closer to the road, sits on a raised, one-story fieldstone foundation. It is sided with vertical, wood boards. A one-story, shed-roofed addition of cast concrete block construction extends the full width of the facade (south elevation). Built in the early 20th-century, this addition was constructed by a mason, hired by Fred Wehner, who made the concrete blocks himself (he fabricated the blocks in a workshop inside the house). Former owner, Aloysius Wehner, described this building as "the garage." It was used for storage of farm equipment and cars. They also had a workshop in this building, where they repaired their vehicles (tractors, etc.).

Contributing gable-roofed barn (early-20th-century) located to the far northeast of the house and behind the front (south) barn. The north barn is sided with vertical, wood board and sits on a fieldstone foundation. Al Wehner referred to this building as the "cow barn."

20. The Volkmar-Wehner House is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of a mid-19th-century, vernacular farmhouse. This historic farm property with its house, outbuildings and 1.9 acres is historically significant for its association with the Volkmar and Wehner families, pioneer settlers in this part of the town. It is also historically significant as an important visual reminder of the town's agricultural heritage.

The ell-plan, gable-roofed house is representative of the typical vernacular farmhouse built in Greece during the mid-19th century. Though the house is vernacular in form, its chamfered porch posts and roof overhang were inspired by the Italianate style. The house is also distinctive for its brick construction. It is one of the few surviving, mid-19th century, brick farmhouses in the town.

The 1852 county map shows this site with a house and out building marked, "A. Spear." It is not clear if this represents the house that is located on the property today. A 1955 newspaper article states that Adam Volkmar built the house here at #2458 Ridgeway Avenue. Volkmar, however, did not immigrate to the U.S. from his native Germany until October, 1854 - some two years after the 1852 map showing two buildings here. It is possible that the present house replaced the earlier building shown on the 1852 map.

According to former owner, Aloysius Wehner, the house was built by his grandfather, Adam Volkmar. Volkmar was one of the many thousands of Germans who came to America during the mid-19th century - the height of German immigration to the U.S. A 1955 Courier Journal article tells of his trip from Europe to America. Volkmar was born in Hesse, Germany. In early October, 1854, he sailed from his native Hesse on the schooner, "New Era." In this three-masted schooner, it took "49 days to make the Atlantic crossing. About 10 miles off Sandy Hook, New Jersey, on November 23, a terrific gale arose and the ship carrying Mr. Volkmar was dashed against a sand bar."

"The frenzied passengers, 350 in all, awaited the arrival of a rescue ship that actually brought new tragedy. A life line was shot to the floundering schooner and the half-crazed passengers grasped to what seemed their only chance of survival."

"The heavy weight on the life line all but capsized the grounded ship and the frightened people would not obey orders

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20. continued

to await their turn. In order to save the passengers on board, the captain was forced to cut the line, dropping those clinging to it into the freezing sea and certain death."

"Faced with storm-tossed waters and the impossibility to help the "New Era" without endangering itself, the would-be rescue ship was forced to return to harbor. Other passengers tried to swim to the sand bar and in their despair threw themselves into the choppy sea to follow the departing ship."

"Only 30 passengers remained alive when Adam Volkmar climbed the main mast of the ship to the crow's nest. 'My father clung to that mast for over two days before he was finally rescued,' his daughter, Mrs. Fred Wehner recounted. 'Then when a ship did arrive, father returned into the hold of the ship after his money belt, which contained a five dollar gold piece - all his earthly possessions,' she said.

"In New York City, Mr. Volkmar was given clothes and found a job on the New York Central Railway. Working his way to the western part of the state, he became a farmhand with wages of one dollar a month, Mrs. Wehner recalls."

The 1872 county map shows this property as 107 with a house marked, "A. Volkmar." Ridgeway Avenue is marked as "Ridge Road" and a small building marked "School No. 2" is located to the east. The Erie Canal is shown just north of the house and parallel to the roadway.

In 1875, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church dedicated its new stone buildings (still extant at 2390 Ridge Road West). Mr. Volkmar was one of the original members of that parish and helped constructed the stone church. One of the original stained glass windows in that church was donated by Mr. Volkmar. The stained glass window commemorated his rescue from the sinking of the "New Era" in 1854. The story of the rescue was depicted in the stained glass window, that had his name ascribed to it. A 1955 article states: "Though the scene of the floundering ship "New Era" is small and detail difficult to see, a large star of hope stands out clearly over the schooner's mast, where the German immigrant clung for life over a hundred years ago." (This stained glass window was extant in 1955; it is not know if it survives today).

Adam Volkmar and his wife, Catherine had nine children: 5

20. continued

girls and 4 boys. They continued to reside here into the early 1900s. The 1902 county map shows this property as a 37-acre parcel owned by Adam Volkmar. The house is the only building shown on the map. The 37-acre farm extends north of the canal and Walker Road (now Long Pond Rd.) forms its western boundary. Ridgeway Avenue is named "Big Ridge Road."

Adam Volkmar died August 5, 1905. The property was bought by his daughter, Katherine Volkmar Wehner, who was born in this house in 1879, and her husband. Katherine's husband, Fred Wehner, is listed as owner on the 1924 county map. The map shows this as a 37-acre parcel with a house and one outbuilding. Ridgeway Ave. is still called, "Big Ridge Road," but the canal is marked as "old canal." The construction of the new Barge Canal to the south, caused this original route to be abandoned in the early 1920s. The 1930 suburban directory lists Fred and Katherine Wehner here (no street number is given); he is listed as a farmer. Their son, Aloysius Wehner, is also listed at this address (as a farmer) in the 1930 directory. They also had another son, Lawrence Wehner.

In a phone interview of 2/10/1995, Aloysius Wehner described much of the historic background of the farm. He was born in this house at #2458 Ridgeway Ave. in 1906. The family continued to own the property into the late 1950s (his mother Katherine Volkmar Wehner, died about 1963).

The family ran this property as a farm for three generations: Adam Volkmar, then his son-in-law, Fred Wehner, and, finally, his grandson, Aloysius Wehner, were all farmers. Al Wehner stopped farming only about 10 years ago; at the time he grew mostly sweet corn. Previously, they grew a variety of crops on the farm: sweet corn, hay, grain, and cabbage. They had beef cattle (and also dairy cows - but only enough for the family's needs), as well as chickens, horses and pigs. At one time his grandfather had peacocks on the farm!

The Wehners owned this property on the north side of Ridgeway, as well as an 87-acre parcel across the street on the south side of Ridgeway. They sold the property at #2458 in the late 1950s, but retained the 87-acre parcel until about 10 years ago (Al Wehner continued to farm this site). The 87-acre parcel was then sold and Canal Ponds Office Park subsequently built.

20. continued

Al Wehner stated that the brick house remained unpainted, natural brick for many years. It was only in this century that the family finally painted the exterior brick with white paint. Almost no changes were made to the house during the Wehner ownership - the two rear, enclosed porches were added in the 1960s, as well as the garage (converted the former woodshed).

The interior of the house never had any fireplaces. Heating was by parlor stove and there was "a stove in every room." When Al Wehner was little (pre-World War I), his father converted to central heating - first with coal and later with oil heat. Al Wehner recalls that his father and a number of other nearby residents had to subscribe to get electricity - which was installed in the 1920s. Prior to that, they used kerosene lanterns for lighting.

The Wehners never installed any indoor plumbing in the house during their ownership. There was no bathroom in the house and no running water. Until selling the property in the late 1950s, they used the outhouse just west of the house and got their water from the well/pump to the northeast of the residence.

The two gable-roofed barns are the only surviving agricultural buildings on the property. Mr. Wehner described how the front (south) barn was used as "the garage" for the repairing of their vehicles. He stated that the one-story, concrete block addition was built by a local mason, but the actual cast concrete blocks were fashioned by his father. He set up a workshop right in the house and cast the blocks there - "It was a mess! Dust everywhere!" according to Al Wehner.

Other outbuildings that were located on the site, but are no longer extant are: a big tool shed near the barns, the pump to the northeast of the house (well is extant), and the outhouse to the west of the residence. There were never any silos on the site.

Al Wehner described the former Erie Canal prism that is located to the north of the house. He stated that the north wall of the prism was of cut stone, but the south wall was of dirt. The towpath was located on the north side of the canal. Al Wehner recalled seeing mule-driven boats on the canal; they often changed mule teams between the Wehner

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20. continued

house and Long Pond Road. After the canal was abandoned (1920s), many of the stones from the north wall were removed by local residents for their own use (construction projects, etc.). Therefore, not much of the original stone wall remains today.

In the 1955 Courier Journal article, Katherine Volkmar Wehner is interviewed about the family. At the time, only two of Adam Volkmar's nine children survived: Mrs. Wehner and her sister, Mrs. Lucy Greinke of 82 Oriole Street in the city. Another sister, then deceased, was Sister St. Felix of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Buffalo.

The 1959 county map shows this site as a 250-foot-wide by 400+-feet deep parcel owned by C. & K. Galek. The brick house, south and north barns and two small, frame outbuildings are shown on the site. To the west of the parcel is a large, rectangular property owned by L.G. & A. Wehner - the present, 1,185-foot-long, open field that extends from this property, west to Long Pond Road. Across the street to the south is a 140-acre parcel owned by Eastman Kodak.

After the sale of the house at #2458 Ridgeway Avenue in the late 1950s, the family continued to reside nearby - just to the southeast and across the street. Al Wehner lives at 2337 Ridgeway Avenue and the family business, Wehner Mower Inc., is nextdoor at 2321 Ridgeway Avenue.

21. See final report for bibliography; "Story of Shipwreck: Adventure Marked By Stained Glass Window," by Robert Smett, Courier Journal, March 4, 1955; phone interview with Aloysius M. Wehner, 2/10/1995.

— ORIGINAL builder of
2458 Ridgeway Avenue.

Story Of Shipwreck

Adventure Marked By Stained Glass Window

By ROBERT SMETT

A story of shipwreck and horror and a miraculous rescue at sea is preserved in stained-glass in St. John the Evangelist Church, Greece, where Adam Volkmar dedicated a church window many years ago to mark the exciting event in his life.

One of the original parishioners of St. John the Evangelist



ADAM VOLKMAR

parish, Adam Volkmar helped build the present church, dedicated in 1875. The story of his rescue can be seen depicted in the stained-glass window that has his name ascribed to it.

Though the scene of the

foundering ship "New Era" is small and detail difficult to see, a large star of hope stands out clearly over the schooner's mast, where the German immigrant clung for life over a hundred years ago.

Mr. Volkmar, who died Aug. 5, 1905, sailed on the "New Era" from his native Blesse, Germany, in early October, 1854, according to his daughter, Mrs. Fred Wehner, who still resides in the family homestead, 2458 Ridgeway Ave.

IN A THREE-MASTED sail schooner of the times, it took 43 days to make the Atlantic crossing. About 10 miles off Sandy Hook, New Jersey on Nov. 23, a terrific gale arose and the ship carrying Mr. Volkmar was dashed against a sand bar.

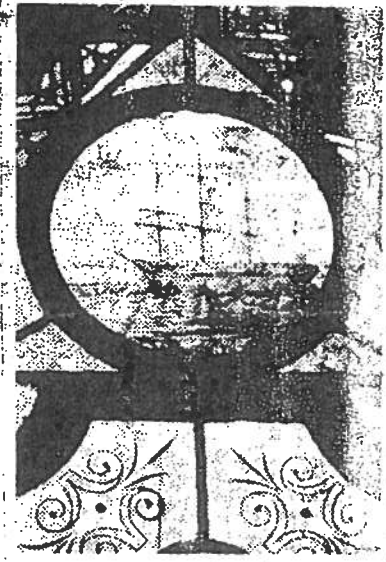
The frenzied passengers, 350 in all, awaited the arrival of a rescue ship that actually brought new tragedy. A life line was shot to the foundering schooner and the half-crazed passengers grasped to what seemed their only chance of survival.

The heavy weight on the life line all but capsized the grounded ship and the frightened people would not obey orders to await their turn. In order to save the passengers on board, the captain was forced to cut the line, dropping those clinging to it into the freezing sea and certain death.

Faced with the storm-tossed waters and the impossibility to help the "New Era" without endangering their own lives, they would be

rescue ship was forced to return to harbor. Other passengers tried to swim to the sand bar and in their despair threw themselves into the choppy sea to follow the departing ship.

ONLY 30 PASSENGERS remained alive when Adam Volkmar climbed the main mast of the ship to the crow's nest. "My father clung to that mast for over two days before he was



WRECK OF THE "NEW ERA"

finally rescued," Mrs. Wehner recounted. "Then when a ship did arrive, father returned to the hold of the ship after his money belt, which contained a five-dollar gold piece—all his earthly possessions," she said.

In New York City, Mr. Volkmar was given clothes and found a job on the New York Central Railway. Working his way to the western part of the state, he became a farmhand with wages of one dollar a month, Mrs. Wehner recalls.

She also remembers her mother telling how she had earned seventy-five cents a week as a young woman, churning butter and performing the other chores of farm work in Scottsville.

Of the nine children, 5 girls and 4 boys, born to Adam and Catherine Volkmar, only Mrs. Wehner and her sister, Mrs. Lucy Greinke, 82 Oriole St., remain. Another sister was the late Sister St. Felix of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Buffalo.

THE PRESENT Wehner home was built by Adam Volkmar and Mrs. Wehner has lived there all her life, having been born in the white farmhouse 76 years ago. The Wehners have two sons, Lawrence and Aloysius and two grandchildren. The sons live side by side with their own families in sight of the homestead.

c. 1876

at
2390
Ridge Rd.
West

